

November 26, 2017

I love attending Dressage4Kids' TEAM clinics. Over the past couple of years that I've had the opportunity to attend the clinics, Lendon and the many lecturers have given me helpful information, advice, and insight that has helped me become a better rider and overall better horsewoman. While every year I learn and grow, I think this year was the best year yet.

I've been training a horse over the past few years and am looking to trying to show first level in the spring. My first lesson with Lendon focused on lengthenings at both the trot and canter (although mainly at the canter because I wanted help with bringing the canter back from the lengthening) and trot leg yields. This lesson was really fun for me and it helped my horse become more in tune with aids as the lesson progressed instead of trying to anticipate what I was going to ask for. Lendon told me that by mixing up exercises it made the movements normalized and less special to both the rider and the horse. For example; if the rider only rides the lengthening on a long side then the horse will start to expect that the long side means to speed up. To avoid this, the rider should ride lengthenings in several different place to show lengthenings could happen at any time. The same thing goes for leg yields.

On the subject of leg yields, Lendon helped me become more effective on my outside rein to control the shoulders in the leg yields. Because my outside rein wasn't as effective my horse would drift to the rail and lead with the shoulders. While I didn't end up with perfect leg yields at the end of the lesson, I did learn how to school them more effectively to make them better for the future. Lendon also advised to me and other people in the clinic that instead of chunking the ride into parts, the rider should mix things ups. This keeps the rider from becoming

hyper focused on perfection (or at least this is true for me) and prevents the horse from getting bored or frustrated.

My second lesson was more focused on components of the FEI Children's test Preliminary B. The second day of the clinic I was asked to ride Prelim B as a demo ride and I planned to ride Prelim B in the the Youth Festival in Atlanta the following day, so Lendon helped me prepare for those two things. We particularly worked on the sitting trot (while maintaining suppleness and throughness) and sitting trot lengthenings, as well as counter canter and canter lengthenings. Lendon stressed the importance of the transition from posting trot to sitting trot, so we spent time making sure that transition could be made without change and without losing relaxation. We also worked on making the trot adjustable (being able to go from a big trot to small trot to regular trot, and in any order). This connected to my first lesson when talked about finding a forward trot so that my horse could be better engaged from the hind end.

I've always had trouble being conservative in the canter lengthening. Lendon helped me to try to go for more of a lengthening. Because I needed more lengthen she advised that I do more than I thought I needed to do. This helped me exaggerate my normal to find what was right. As for bringing back the canter, she told me to play with the lengthening to figure out how long it took to bring it back, that way I would know for the future and during a test.

I'm really glad that I had this opportunity and I'm very excited to go back next year!